

REPORT

FROM

THE POSTMASTER GENERAL,

*In compliance with a resolution of the Senate, relative to an increase of
Salary of the Clerks in the General Post Office.*

MAY 9, 1836.

Read, and ordered to be printed.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, May 9, 1836.

SIR : In obedience to the resolution of the Senate adopted on the 25th ultimo, directing the several heads of the Executive Departments to report to the Senate their several and respective opinions upon the justice and propriety of increasing the compensation of all or any of the clerks in their respective Departments, I have the honor to submit the following report :

In 1818 the clerks of this Department were fixed by law at one chief clerk, at a salary of \$1,700 ; two clerks at salaries of \$1,400 each ; five at \$1,200 ; nine at \$1,000 ; and four at \$800 ; making twenty-one in all.

In 1824, four clerks were added, at \$1,000 each, and two at \$800.

In 1827, one clerk was added, at \$1,400, and five at \$1,000 each.

In 1828, five clerks were added, at \$1,000 each.

No additions have been made since by law, and the present legal provision for this Department is as follows, viz :

1 chief clerk, at a salary of	-	-	-	\$1,700
3 clerks, at	-	-	-	1,400 each
5 clerks, at	-	-	-	1,200 "
23 clerks, at	-	-	-	1,000 "
6 clerks, at	-	-	-	800 "

38 clerks in all.

This force has long since been found inadequate to perform the labors of the Department, and for many years past the Postmaster General has employed extra clerks, whose compensation has, in the first instance, been paid out of the funds of the Department, and the amount afterwards appropriated by Congress and refunded out of the Treasury. The actual force of the Department, in clerks, as it at present exists, is as follows :

1 chief clerk, at a salary of	-	-	-	\$1,700
3 clerks, at	-	-	-	1,400 each
9 clerks, at	-	-	-	1,200 "
1 clerk, at	-	-	-	1,100
24 clerks, at	-	-	-	1,000 each
7 clerks, at	-	-	-	900 "
42 clerks, at	-	-	-	800 "
4 clerks, at	-	-	-	600 "
1 clerk, at	-	-	-	500

92 clerks in all, including the superintendent of the building, and openers of dead letters.

Two Assistant Postmasters General, at salaries of \$2,500 each ; a messenger, at \$700 ; one assistant messenger, at \$400, two at \$350 ; two night-watch, at \$250 each ; and two laborers, at \$240 each ; make up the entire force now employed in and about the Post Office Department.

To afford a distinct view of the subject of salaries in this Department, it appears necessary to travel beyond the words of the resolution, and consider the rate of compensation now paid to the persons employed, from the Assistant Postmasters General to the laborers, inclusive. Before entering into an examination of particular points, the undersigned begs leave to submit the following list of officers, clerks, &c. necessary under the present organization to the proper administration of this Department, with such salaries annexed as, in his opinion, are best adapted to the faithful and energetic performance of its complicated duties.

Four Assistant Postmasters General, at	-	-	-	\$3,000 each
One chief clerk, at	-	-	-	2,400
Eight principal clerks, at	-	-	-	1,800 each
Twenty clerks,	-	-	-	1,500 "
Forty clerks, at	-	-	-	1,200 "
Twenty clerks, at	-	-	-	900 "
One messenger, at	-	-	-	900
Three assistant messengers, at	-	-	-	600 each
Two night-watch, at	-	-	-	300 "
Two laborers, at	-	-	-	300 "

Each of these sums affords an equal subdivision by twelve. Salaries are paid at the end of each calendar month, and the present rates produce fractions in the accounts. Simplicity is deemed as essential in public accounts as in any thing else, and it appears to the undersigned that it should not be overlooked in fixing on a tariff of salaries.

There are now four divisions in the interior organization of this Department, the duties of which are of the most arduous character. At the head of two of these divisions are the two assistants now allowed by law, at salaries of \$2,500 ; at the head of the third, is the chief clerk, at a salary of \$1,700 ; and at the head of the fourth is a clerk denominated the accountant, at a salary of \$1,400. There are no Auditors in the Government whose duties are more laborious and responsible than those performed by the heads of these divisions, and none who deserve higher compensation. The chief clerk who performs the duties of chief clerk in addition to those of the head of a division, is now paid \$300 less than the

chief clerks of the other Departments, and the accountant, who has under his supervision and direction about fifty clerks, and encounters more labor and responsibility than any Auditor, receives a grade of pay \$300 less than an Auditor's chief clerk.

The principal clerks, as they are called, constitute a class of clerks not known, at least to the same extent, in any other Department. To the heads of divisions, a part of them occupy the relation of chief clerks. In the division of accounts there are several who superintend the subdivisions, such as the solicitor, who superintends four or five clerks; the chief examiner, who has under him about twenty clerks; the principal register, who has about ten clerks; principal pay-clerk, &c. There are now seven clerks occupying these positions, and there should be an eighth in the miscellaneous division. They should be raised in salary above the ordinary clerks, and to that end the undersigned has proposed for them \$1,800 each.

Three grades, \$1,500, \$1,200, and \$900, are proposed for the salaries of ordinary clerks. A salary of \$900 will support a single man in this city, and if he be prudent, afford him a moderate income. A married man without children can barely subsist upon it. For him a salary of \$1,200 is less than a salary of \$900 for a single man. And if he have a family of children, he can lay up less out of \$1,500 than the single man can out of \$900. Indeed, these rates of salary would afford the clerks generally, little more than the means of subsistence for themselves and families. They are not, therefore, unreasonably high.

The present salary of the messenger of this Department is \$700. Formerly, he enjoyed perquisites in the waste paper, &c., which are supposed to have made his compensation more than \$1,000. Deeming the whole matter of perquisites to be of evil tendency, the undersigned has abolished them, and directed all waste paper, old furniture, &c., to be sold for the benefit of the Department. He deems it but just, however, to replace them in part to an officer so confidential and so constantly employed, by a direct increase of his salary.

The assistant messengers also had their perquisites, which have been cut off. One of them formerly received \$200 as librarian, making his compensation \$600, besides perquisites. The other two received \$350 and \$300, with a participation in the perquisites. It would be right to place them all at \$600.

Heretofore \$500 per year have been appropriated by Congress for two watchmen. It is proposed to increase their compensation to \$300 each.

It will have been perceived that four persons only are employed in the Department as messengers, each of whom on an average is obliged to attend upon about twenty-four officers and clerks. The average force employed upon that duty in other Departments, compared with the number to be served, is about double. In this Department, it is found absolutely necessary to employ laborers to aid them, and perform much other service, in doors and out, which does not usually fall within the scope of messengers' duties. Two have generally been employed, and it is anticipated that two will hereafter find constant service. It is proposed to put them on regular pay at \$300 each.

It is true that even the lower salaries in this Department are much sought after, and there are generally from one to two hundred applicants.

on hand who would be willing to accept even of \$800. But they are almost exclusively young unmarried men—men in desperate circumstances, or men who are incompetent to make a living elsewhere, and seek for these appointments as a means of meager support to themselves and families. The consequence is, that a large proportion, probably a considerable majority of the clerks of this Department, are hopeless insolvents, and many of them are put to great straits even to subsist themselves and families on their present compensation. The payment of old debts is out of the question. When they die, their families are instantly reduced to extreme want, and instances are not uncommon in which resort is immediately had to contributions for means to bury the dead and furnish bread to the living.

There are many excellent clerks in this Department; but the undersigned is satisfied that, with the salaries proposed, he would be able, on the whole, much to improve the corps in talents, efficiency, and character. The number proposed is somewhat less than the number now employed, and he would have recommended a more extensive reduction, but for the certain prospect of an immediate increase of about one-fourth in the business of the Department, which will produce a great increase of labor. With the means of present support, and a prospect of advancement to liberal salaries, he thinks he can induce men of a high grade of intellect and business qualifications to enter into the public service, and render unnecessary, for the present, a further increase of clerks.

Appointments to the more honorable and lucrative stations in this Government have been heretofore, and will be hereafter, made chiefly from political considerations. When a citizen leaves his home in the States, and accepts a clerkship in the District of Columbia, as a permanent employment, he, in effect, surrenders all prospect of rising to the higher honors of his country, and even all hope of acquiring extensive wealth. Faithful clerks have sometimes, though not often, been advanced to chief clerks; but probably no case has occurred, since the organization of the Government, in which they have been promoted to the higher stations. It seems but right that men of talents and great business qualifications, who voluntarily relinquish all high aspirations, and content themselves with the distinction which is to be gained within the walls of the Executive Departments, should be paid by their country a compensation so liberal that they will not be obliged to raise their children in ignorance, and leave their families in want.

That there is much improvidence among clerks cannot be denied. But with most of the present rates of salary, it matters little to their families, in the end, whether they are improvident or not. While they live, the families of the provident undoubtedly enjoy a higher degree of comfort; but upon their death or removal from office, the wives and children of all are plunged into the same condition of destitution and distress. If there be exceptions, they are but evidences of superior tact, management, and economy.

In concluding this report, the undersigned begs leave to call the attention of the Senate to the fact that more than one-half the force of this Department is employed without warrant of law. That portion of his force he should feel it his duty to discharge until it should be legalized by act of Congress, if only an inconvenience, at all tolerable in its nature and extent, would be the result. But when he knows that such a step

would stop, to a most fatal extent, the operations of the Department, and bring incalculable mischief on the country, he feels himself obliged to persist in the employment of clerks thus far unauthorized by Congress, though for years excused by appropriations to refund the resulting expenditure. He cannot, however, but express the earnest hope that Congress will, before the close of the present session, put an end, by the necessary legislation, to a state of things so disreputable to our Government, and so well calculated to excuse future assumptions of unauthorized power by the heads of Executive Departments.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

AMOS KENDALL.

Hon. MARTIN VAN BUREN,

Vice President, and President of the Senate.

would stop to a vast total extent the operation of the Government, and being practically interdicted on the contrary, he feels himself obliged to persist in the carrying out of claims thus far authorized by Congress, though for years excused by appropriators to refund the resulting expenditure. The Senate, however, has expressed the earnest hope that Congress will before the close of the present session, but not only by the necessary legislation to a bill of which so dispositive to our Government, and so well calculated to excuse future assumptions of unauthorized power by the heads of Executive Departments.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant

JAMES KENDALL

Hon. Martin Van Buren
Vice President, and President of the Senate



